

39 ESL Icebreakers: For Teenagers and Adults ----- Jackie Bolen + Jennifer Booker Smith ----- Table of

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About the Author: Jackie Bolen

I've been teaching English in South Korea for a decade, to every level and type of student, from kindergarten to adults. Most of my time has been centered around teaching at two universities: five years at a science and engineering school out in the rice paddies of Chungcheongnam-Do, and presently at a major university in Busan, where I teach high-level courses for students major- ing in English. In my spare time, you can usually find me surfing, biking, hik- ing, or on the hunt for the most delicious kimchi I can find. In case you were wondering what my academic qualifications are, I hold a Mas- ter of Arts in Psychology. During my time in Korea, I've successfully completed both the Cambridge CELTA and DELTA certification programs. With the combination of ten years experience teaching ESL/EFL learners of all ages and levels, and formal teaching qualifications, I have a solid foundation to offer teaching advice. I truly hope that you find this book useful and I would love it if you sent me an email with any questions or feedback that you might have—I'll always take the time to personally respond (jb.business.online@gmail.com).

Jackie Bolen around the

Internet ESL Speaking (www.eslspeaking.org) Jackie

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@bolen_jackie If you can't get enough of the ESL games, activities, and other useful class- room resources in this book, you can get even more goodness delivered straight to your inbox every week. I promise to respect your privacy—your name and email address will never be shared with anyone for any reason.

About the Author: Jennifer Booker Smith

I have a Master of Education in TESOL and have spent fifteen years teaching students of all ages in Korea, from two-year-old preschoolers barely out of diapers to businessmen, and even a semester as a teacher trainer at an education university. However, my greatest love is the middle primary grades—I left a fairly cushy teacher trainer position to return to the elementary classroom. In that age group, I've taught all ability levels from false beginner to near-native returnees. During my time in the classroom, I've created countless board and card games, and other resources. In this book, you'll find some of the speaking activities which I have used successfully in a variety of setting. I've tried plenty of activities which weren't successful, but these are the ones I've used again and again because they get students talking and they actually work. Like Jackie, when I'm not teaching,

you can often find me hiking. I've taken up running recently, and will soon be running my second half marathon. Teaching takes up a lot more "free" time than non-teachers will ever realize, so it's important to recharge the batteries. Being outside is my favorite way to do

just that. You can get in touch with me by emailing jenniferteacher@gmail.com. I'd love to hear from you and help you with your classes in any way that I can, particularly if you have a difficult class. I'll do my best to offer some advice to assist

you. If you would like some ready-made materials, check out my store on Teachers Pay Teachers at <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/Teach-Travel-Learn>.

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You can get in touch with me by emailing jenniferteacher@gmail.com. I'd love to hear from you and help you with your classes in any way that I can, particularly if you have a difficult class. I'll do my best to offer some advice to assist

you. If you would like some ready-made materials, check out my store on Teachers Pay Teachers at <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/Teach-Travel-Learn>.

How to Use Icebreakers Icebreakers are a great way to start class for several reasons. On the first day of class, or the first few classes, they can help students to become acquainted with one another in a fun, relaxed way. Also, they help reduce the affective filter which will allow communication to happen more easily. Keeping in mind the goal of improving your students' language skills, you should choose icebreakers which will get your students talking with one another in the target language. So, while there are many team-building activities out there which may be very fun or exciting, if they are done without using English, you are only halfway there. You want to choose your icebreaker activities with a few things in mind. If the students don't know you or each other very well, you will want some good introductory or getting-to-know you activities. As the semester continues, it will be more important to consider how the icebreaker leads into the main lesson. For example, if you are teaching persuasive language, an activity such as Two Truths and a Lie or Used Card Salesman will help transition them to the main lesson. Icebreakers can also be used as an informal assessment tool. As you mingle, you can monitor the class, and get a feel for the students' strengths and weaknesses in a given area. Obviously, an activity like Group Therapy will have students just tell you their perceived weaknesses, but with Conversation Starters or Would You Rather, for example, you can gauge their levels as well as get to know them better. Finally, you should be using icebreaker activities to engage your

students, a step further than just using English. It's great to get them accustomed to using English and relaxed enough to speak, but unless you plan to use the full period getting to know one another, the task also needs to be leading somewhere. A well-designed plan will tie together your icebreaker and the main lesson.

39 ESL Icebreakers for Teenagers and Adults 2 Truths and a

Lie Skills: Writing/listening/speaking Materials Required: Nothing Play in groups of 4-6 in a larger class, or play together in a smaller class. My general rule is that if you allow minimal or no follow-up questions, it takes around 3-4 minutes per student. However, if you allow 2-3 minutes of questions, it takes about 6-7 minutes per student. It's a good activity to use "always, usually, sometimes, never" or "can, can't" and "I've." Students write three sentences, one of which is false. They read their sentences and the other students guess the false one. Higher level classes can ask three questions, or question the person for a pre-determined amount of time (2-3 minutes) to determine the false one. A correct guess gets one point. Each student gets to play one turn. **Teaching Tips:** This is a useful activity for practicing the speaking sub-skills of initiating a conversation and responding in a doubtful way. For example, if you allow question time, students can say something like, "So you can make/play/do ____? I don't believe you! Tell me ____" if you allow question time. You can do this as a single activity in one class, or you can also do it over a series of days. For example, I

taught at a winter camp where I had the same group of students for 10 days in a row. My class had 20 students, so as a warm-up for each day, 2 students had to go in the “hot-seat” (one at a time) and we got to ask the students questions about their 2 truths and 1 lie for three minutes. I appointed a “captain” to keep track of the points throughout the two weeks. The two winners got a \$5 *Starbucks* gift certificate, which was a small way to add some friendly competition to the class. You can also give points to the student in the hot-seat for anyone who doesn't figure out the correct answer. But, choose your method; this way or the other as described above. If you do both, it gets complicated and confusing very quickly! Emphasize that students must pick things that are “big picture” ideas. The examples I give as poor ideas are things like birthdays, hospital they were born in, name of sister, etc. There is simply no way to verify this information through asking any sort of interesting questions. Better categories are things like hobbies, travel, part-time jobs, skills, and abilities. I have students write down their statements and try to catch any of the terrible ideas before the game starts. **Procedure:** 1. Write three sentences on the board about yourself: two are true and one is not. 2. Explain to students that they are to do the same for themselves. 3. Do your demonstration with one group. Read your sentences and those students can ask three questions (or have two minutes, etc.) to ask questions. 4. Each student in the group must choose for themselves which sentence is false. Reveal the answer and whoever guessed correctly gets a point. 5. The

students play the game in small groups, making sure that each person gets a chance to share their three statements. You can help move the activity along by acting as a time-keeper by giving each student's turn a specific time limit.

Ask Me About Skills: Speaking Materials Required: Name labels This is not an activity for students who are very shy. Before class, print sticky name tags with "Ask Me About" and a cheeky prompt. For example: "... the first time I got drunk," or "... my worst date ever." Have students mingle and ask each other the prompt on their name tags. This is better for adults who know each other a bit and should be used after you've had a few classes together. If you feel that cheeky prompts would offend your students, stick to safer ones such as first jobs, or the best vacation. **Procedure:** 1. In advance, print an "Ask Me About" name tag sticker for each student. Each should have a different prompt, such as, "... my worst date ever," or "... my first job." 2. As students come in to class, give them each a sticker to put on like a name tag. 3. Have students mingle, asking each other the prompts on their tags. 4. You can wrap this up by asking a few students the best story a classmate told them.

Ball

Toss Skills: Reading/speaking/listening Materials: Lightweight ball (such as a beach ball) with questions written on it This game has many variations. One variation I have used with great success is writing questions on a beach ball. I use a white board marker

to write on the ball, but let it dry thoroughly before class, so it doesn't smudge but it can be washed clean and reused with different questions later. Students gently toss the ball to one another and read aloud and answer the question under their right thumb. A more complex variation is: Student A reads/asks the question, tosses the ball to Student B, who answers that question, then asks the question under their right thumb, and tosses the ball to Student C, who answers Student B's question. If it's a "getting to know you" activity, use questions to elicit name, age, and basic information. Otherwise, it can be used to practice likes/dislikes, 5 W/H- questions, etc. It is quite a versatile activity and can be used with just about anything that you're studying. If you don't have a ball handy, you can crumple up a piece of paper to use as a ball. Ask a question and toss the ball to a student. That student must answer and ask a question (the same question for true beginners or related question, if higher level), then toss the "ball" to the next student. If you want the students to ask different questions, you should give them a topic (daily routine, hobbies, etc.) or grammar pattern to use. If you want to make sure all students have equal turns, have students sit down after catching the ball. If you have more than 10-12 students in your class, you may want to divide them into groups, each with their own ball, so students aren't waiting long periods between turns. This will also increase student talking time. **Teaching Tips:** At the end, you may want to ask students questions about other students' answers. Let students know before they begin that they need to listen closely to each other's answers. This will make them more

likely to pay attention between their own turns and, of course, provide additional listening and speaking practice. Generally, this activity can be used with all ages. You can even use it with younger students as long as their ability is high enough to answer the questions. The same for class size: you can use it for larger classes, as long as their level is more advanced, simply because they will be better suited to working in small groups with less attention needed from you. If you have a class of 30 beginners, you might want to simply toss the ball and ask a question, rather than require them to read it, and have each student repeat the same question as they toss the ball. After 10-12 students have asked and answered the same question, take the ball and toss it to a different student, asking a new question.

Procedure: 1. Prepare a beach ball by writing questions on it. Allow enough time for the ink to dry before class. Low prep version: crumple up a piece of scrap paper with the questions written on it. 2. Have students stand in a circle (as much as possible). If your class is large, divide students into groups of 10-12. **Variation A:** When a student catches the ball, they must read out the question under their right thumb. They answer their own question and toss the ball to another student. **Variation B:** When Student A catches the ball, they ask the question under their right thumb to Student B. When Student B answers, A tosses them the ball. Student B asks Student C the question under their right thumb and so on. **No Prep Variation:** The teacher asks a question and tosses the ball to Student A. Student A answers, asks Student B a question, and tosses them the ball.

Bucket Lists Skills: Speaking/listening Materials

Required: Optional: Example bucket list poster or PPT Give students about five minutes to create a list of three things they want to do, see, or accomplish before they die. Have them partner up to discuss for 2-3 minutes, then change partners. **Procedure:** 1. Begin by asking students if they have heard the term “bucket list.” Then, show them your example, or simply tell them three things you want to do, see, or accomplish before you die. 2. Give students about five minutes to create their own bucket lists. 3. Divide students into partners to share their bucket lists, then have them change partners. Encourage the students to ask each other some follow-up questions about the list.

Conversation Starters Skills:

Speaking/Listening Materials Required: Conversation starters These are 10 conversation starters which are guaranteed to get your students talking. Put students into groups of 3-4, give them the topic, and allot them 4-5 minutes to talk about it. Encourage them to ask each other follow-up questions. It can be helpful to give students some thinking time (1-2 minutes) before the discussion for some of these questions (example: Bucket List). **If I Won the Lottery** Have students describe what they would do or what they would buy if they won the lottery. I usually specify an amount of \$1,000,000. **Bucket List** Students need to think of five things they want to do before they die. **Guilty Pleasures** Explain to the students what a guilty pleasure is—they likely won’t know. Then, it’s

time for confessions! **Things You've Learned**

Lately Have students think of two or three things that they couldn't do as a child, but can do now. Emphasize that it's related to a skill of some kind or you'll just

get answers like drinking or smoking. **Last Purchase**

Have students talk about the last thing they bought

that was more than \$100. **You're the President** Your

students can talk about what their top three priorities

would be if they were in office. **Favorite**

Things Students submit questions starting with, "What

is your favorite ____?" Collect the papers, choose the

best three responses, and then students must

answer them. **Horoscopes** Find some daily or monthly

horoscopes online. Students read their description and

see if they match. They can discuss this with a small

group or partner. **People in Your Life** Who are the

three people that you spend the most time with these

days? **The Best Decision** Students think of a difficult

decision they made, of which they're confident

they made the right choice.

Cocktail Party Skills: Speaking/listening Materials

Required: None Small talk is a necessary skill, but can

be difficult for non-native speakers, especially those

from countries where such conversation is not

common. Explain to the students that they are at a

cocktail party being thrown by their spouse/partner's

company. They must engage in small talk with a group

of 3-4 people for 2-3 minutes. You may need to scaffold

the activity with common cocktail party conversation:

current events, sports, even the weather, if they must.

Let them know certain topics are typically NOT

appropriate at a cocktail party: political opinions, religious discussions, salary, or any other controversial topics. Additionally, demonstrate how to ask follow-up questions. The main points of the activity are to practice speaking with relative strangers about inconsequential topics and asking follow-up questions. Wrap up the activity by asking each group what topics they discussed and give feedback. **Teaching**

Tip: Depending on the level of your students, when you demonstrate the activity, you may need to bring to their attention that you are making follow-up questions based on your partner's answers. Otherwise, your students may end up asking each other a list of unrelated questions without really listening to the answers.

Procedure: 1. Explain to your class that they will be attending a cocktail party for their spouse/partner's company. Their spouse/partner is called away from them (to answer a call, talk to the boss, whatever), so they must mingle alone. 2. Elicit from students typical topics of cocktail party conversation. Add to the list, as necessary: current events, sports, favorite TV shows (particularly very popular ones that the other guests are likely to be familiar with), etc. 3. Elicit from students topics of conversation which would NOT be appropriate, such as salary, age, religion, etc. If necessary, explain that these topics would be considered too personal or controversial for a cocktail party. 4. Have students stand and begin to mingle. 5. After 2-3 minutes, have students change groups. Time allowing, have them chat in three groups for 2-3 minutes each.

Cosmo

Quiz Skills: Speaking/listening/reading Materials

Required: a Cosmo quiz or Cosmo-type quiz If you are a guy, you may not be familiar with the quiz in each month's edition of *Cosmopolitan* magazine. These generally predict something about your relationship style, finances, etc. In other words, they are quiz-style horoscopes. They are pretty fun to do as a group, because they are not meant to be taken seriously, but can tell you a little something about the quiz-taker. Prep could not be easier. Simply find a few old issues of Cosmo and copy the quizzes. Some of them are a bit risqué, so decide for yourself if you want to edit them a bit. I've had all-female classes, and kept it a little racy, but all the students were about my age. In class, begin with a brief discussion of personality quizzes: has anyone ever taken one, etc. Divide students into pairs or small groups of 3-4 and give them one or two quizzes with the results on a different page. Have them read the questions and discuss the answers, keeping track of their answers, if they want. You can wrap up with a survey of results and questions of how students feel about the quizzes. Are they accurate, fun, or a waste of time? **Teaching**

Tips: You can find quizzes on their website: <http://www.cosmopolitan.com/content/quizzes/>, but the questions are given one at a time, so if you can get your hands on print quizzes, it will make your life easier. If you think they are inappropriate for your class, you can always just make up a quiz in the same Cosmo style: ten multiple choice personality questions with points assigned to

each answer. There are usually results for three point ranges. You can either give everyone one quiz and each group reads and answers the questions together, or you can have students alternate asking and answering. You can extend the activity by having students change partners and taking a different quiz. **Procedure:** 1. In advance, gather several different issues of Cosmo magazine and copy the quizzes. You may need to edit the questions or leave some out. 2. Begin class by asking if anyone has ever taken a personality quiz and how they feel about them. 3. Divide students into pairs or small groups of 3-4 and give them one or two quizzes with the results on a separate page. 4. Have them read the questions and discuss the answers, keeping track of their answers, if they want. 5. Optionally, extend the activity by having groups change partners and take a new quiz.

Deserted Island Skills:

Speaking/listening Materials Required: None Deserted Island is an excellent way to uncover what things are most important to students. Tell students that there is a terrible storm and their ship is sinking, but thankfully, they can bring three objects with them. It doesn't need to be realistic or necessary for survival, just something that they want to have with them during their time on the island. Encourage creativity and imagination. Then, have students share their answers with the class (if less than ten students), or in small groups (in larger classes), and give a reason why they'd bring each item. **Procedure:** 1. Tell students that they are on a ship and it's sinking. Thankfully,

there is an island nearby that is already well-stocked with everything they'll need for survival. 2. Each student has to choose three things that they'd like to have with them during their time on the island. It doesn't need to be realistic or necessary for survival. 3. Students share their answers and why they chose each item with the class (if less than ten students), or in small groups (in larger classes).

Egg Drop Skills: Team-work Materials Required: Construction materials, raw eggs, a “high” place The egg drop is an excellent icebreaker for teenagers and young adults to encourage teamwork and allow students to get to know each other in small groups of 3-4. The goal for each team is to design something in a certain period of time that will allow a raw egg to survive a fall from a high place (4-5 floors works well). I usually give students about 30 minutes and bring in a wide variety of materials: egg cartons, balloons, construction paper, news- papers, magazines, straws, tape, scissors, glue, paperclips, pipe-cleaners, etc. The only requirement is that the raw egg has to fit inside of it somehow, but the rest is up to their imagination. Then, go together to a roof-top and drop the eggs, one at a time. Post someone down below to prevent any eggs from drop- ping on random people. Then, go downstairs together and open the packages to see whose egg survived. **Procedure:** 1. Put students into small groups of 3-4. Give them a choice of construction materials, as well as a raw egg. 2. Allow each team a set amount of time (30 minutes to 1 hour) to design something that will help their egg withstand

a fall from 4-5 stories. 3. Drop the eggs and see which ones survived.

“Find Someone Who ____”

Bingo Skills: Speaking/listening/writing Materials Required: Blank “Bingo” grids or blank paper (optional PowerPoint or white board and marker) This is a good ice breaker to help students get to know one another or to practice asking and answering questions about likes/dislikes, future plans, hobbies, etc. If I have my own classroom, I keep a stack of blank grids handy, but if I'm moving from class to class, I tend to have students use their notebooks. To save time, I prepare a PowerPoint with possible items to complete the Bingo grid, such as a list of hobbies, jobs, places, etc.—whatever topics you want to include. If I'm using this as an icebreaker, I may list hobbies, musical instruments, and popular films or games so students may learn that one student plays the cello and another studied science in university. If we are practicing future plans, this list might include jobs, places, types of housing, etc. and students will then practice saying things like, “I want to be a manager,” “I want to buy a bigger apartment” or, “I want to buy a BMW.” Rather than have a Bingo caller, students must circulate around the class and ask each other questions to mark out items on their grid. For example, if the topic is jobs, they could ask, “What do you do?” I have them write the other student's name in the grid, rather than simply cross it out. So, if a student says, “Doctor,” they will write that student's name in that block. Before you

begin, give them a target of one line, etc. to get Bingo. **Teaching Tips:** Rather than make a PowerPoint, you could simply write the items on the board. If you want to give students more autonomy, simply give them a topic and have them brainstorm. You should have more items than will fit on the grid, but you can use 3X3 or 4X4 grids if you want to make the activity go more quickly. I encourage students to move around by only allowing each name to be used once per board in a large class. If the class is quite small, two to three times on a 5x5 grid may be necessary. The goal is to have students practicing the target language, rather than standing with one person and saying, “Do you like apples? Oranges? Bananas? Pears? Melons? Bingo!” **Procedure:** 1. Optional: prepare Bingo grid cards and a PowerPoint with questions before class. Otherwise, have students use notebook paper. Tell them what size grid to draw: 3x3, 4x4, or 5x5. 2. Have students fill in their grid with items from the PPT or whiteboard, or create their own, according to a given topic, such as hobbies or likes/dislikes. 3. Have students mingle and ask questions to match students to their grid spaces. For example, student A asks, “Do you like apples?” If student B answers, “Yes, I do,” student A writes their name in the “apples” box and moves to the next student. 4. The first student to get a Bingo by finding different students to complete their grid is the winner.

Find Something in Common Skills:

Speaking/listening Materials Required: None This activity is an excellent way for everyone to get to know

each other. The students stand up with a piece of paper and pencil in their hand. They have to talk to everyone in the class to try to find something in common (they are both from Seoul, or they both know how to play the piano). Once they find this thing in common, they write it down along with the person's name. Keep going until most of the students have talked to

everyone. **Teaching Tips:** This is a great activity for students to practice the sub-skill of initiating a conversation, which is something that many of them find quite difficult. You could coach your students before the activity starts and give them a few phrases or conversation starters to keep in their head if they get stuck. However, since this game is mostly for higher level students, I wouldn't write them on the board because students will be referring back to them throughout the activity when they are actually capable of remembering a few phrases in their head and can recall them easily. Many students struggle with speaking because it happens in real time. Unlike in writing, where we can plan first and then produce later, in speaking, planning and production overlap and often happen at the same time. If our students focus too much on planning, fluency can suffer. If they focus too much on production, accuracy can suffer. In this activity, fluency is far more important than accuracy because the students are having short, small-talk type conversations. I tell my students not too worry too much about choosing the perfect vocabulary word, or exact grammar constructions, but instead just focus on communicating quickly, in a way that is "good enough." Tell your students that while it is okay to have short conversations about the thing they have in

common, the goal of the activity is to try to talk to most of the people in the class, so they need to keep moving and talking to new people. I recommend to my students that they try to spend only 1-2 minutes talking with each person. **Procedure:** 1. Students stand up with a pencil and paper in their hands. 2. They talk to another student and try to find something they have in common by asking some questions. Questions that work really well are ones like, "Have you ever ____ (lived abroad)?", "Are you ____ (an only child)?" or, "Do you ____ (have a brother)?" 3. Once they find something in common, they write that down, along with the person's name. 4. Then, they find a new partner and continue until they've talked to everybody in the class or the time is up.

Four Corners Skills: Listening Materials Required: None This is an opinion poll activity. Students start in the middle of the classroom. Designate each corner as: strongly agree, strongly disagree, no opinion, don't know about the topic. (You can give other options, if you would rather they choose a definite opinion.) Give them a controversial statement, or at least something most will have an opinion about. Have them move to the corner that matches their opinion. Once everyone has moved, give them another statement. Continue for five minutes, or 5-10 statements. **Variation:** Only have two opinions: strongly agree/disagree or love/hate. **Teaching Tip:** Prepare your classroom in advance, so there is room to move around the class and room to gather in the corners. If your classroom is too small, try the variation with

only two opinions, so students only need to gather on one side or the other. **Procedure:** 1. In advance, clear enough space in each corner of the room for students to gather. 2. Designate each corner as: strongly agree/strongly disagree/no opinion/don't know about the topic. Alternatively, you could divide the classroom in half:

agree or disagree. 3. Give students a controversial statement. Prepare 5-10 statements in advance, focusing on recent news items, or other topics your students are likely to have an opinion about. 4. Have students move to the corner/side which matches their opinion. 5. When everyone is in a corner, give them a new statement and have them move again. 6. Continue for about 5 minutes or 5-10 statements.

Group Therapy Skills:

Speaking/listening Materials Required: None In the style of an AA meeting, students sit in a circle if possible and introduce themselves, "My name is _____, and I'm _____." Instead of finishing with "... and I'm an alcoholic," finish with a problem they have learning English, such as using articles correctly or conjugating verbs. They should then solicit tips and tricks from their classmates. The teacher should begin by modeling and could give an actual problem they have as a language student. For example, "My name is Jennifer, and I'm never sure how formal or polite to be when speaking Korean to someone I don't know well. Does anyone have any advice for me?"

Teaching

Tip: This is a great first day activity, because it is a not-very-sneaky way to get an idea of what areas of

language the students perceive to be more difficult, which you can use to inform your lesson planning for the semester. **Procedure:** 1. Before class, arrange the desks in a circle, if possible. If the class is very large, divide students into several large groups. 2. Begin by telling your students that everyone has trouble learning languages, and even those who speak several languages fluently have difficulty with some aspect of any language they learn. 3. Introduce the lesson as “therapy” for them to get counseling for their troubles. 4. Begin with your own example of a problem you have with a foreign language you speak. For example, “My name is Jennifer, and I’m never sure how formal or polite to be when speaking Korean to someone I don’t know well. Does anyone have any advice for me?” 5. Go around the circle and give each student a turn to introduce themselves, “My name is _____, and I’m _____.” Instead of finishing with “. . . and I’m an alcoholic,” finish with a problem they have learning English, such as using articles correctly or conjugating verbs. They should then solicit tips and tricks from their classmates.

Introduction Survey

Skills: Speaking/listening/writing/reading Materials: Survey handout Give the students a sheet of paper with various questions. They need to find one of their classmates who fit each slot. Generally, one question requires around two minutes of interaction time for intermediate to advanced students, so 10 questions would equal a 20 minute activity. For beginners, expect one minute per question for beginners because they

will not be as good at asking follow-up questions. On your survey paper, you could include questions like: "Do you travel sometimes?" or, "Are you a university student?" If their partner answers yes (encourage students to answer in full sentences!), they write down their partner's name and ask them one (beginner) or two (intermediate to advanced) more questions to elicit some extra information. They can only ask each classmate one question. If their partner's answer is no, they should choose another question to ask them. Encourage students to answer in full sentences! Prep the activity well before you turn students loose by saying what you're looking for: only speaking English, everybody standing up, talking to everybody in mostly full sentences, writing the answers in English. Demonstrate the activity first. Get a student to ask you one of the questions, and then you ask a student one of the questions so your students have two models of what they need to do. Here is a survey that I would use on the first day of class:

Get to Know Each Other Survey

| Name | Do you ____? Are you ____? | Extra Information |
|------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| | from outside this city | |
| | in third year | |
| | play sports | |
| | live alone | |

eat pizza a lot

an only child

play sports

have a part time job

have a boyfriend or girlfriend

like horror movies

in second year

take the subway to school

think English is the best subject

enjoying this class

love your school

like studying English

Teaching Tips: Surveys are an excellent way for students to practice important speaking sub- skills, especially giving appropriate responses based on what their partner tells them. For example, if they are surprised they could respond with, “Really?” If in agreement, they could say, “Yeah, me too.” If in strong disagreement, they could say something like, “Wow! Why do you think that?” You could even

put three categories on the board for “Agree,” “Disagree” and “Surprise” and elicit a few ideas from the students about appropriate things they could say in response to a statement. Another important speaking sub-skill is turn taking. I emphasize to my students that there are times when in-depth and lengthy discourses are necessary such as a presentation, but doing a survey activity like this mimics small talk. In small talk, the keys points are to listen well, ask interesting questions, ask follow-up questions, give short and concise answers, and not to ramble. I will sometimes give my students an example of a rambling answer and they usually find it really funny, but I hope that they get the point too! **Procedure:**

1. Prepare the survey, based on whatever topic you are studying.
2. Hand out the surveys and write one or two of the question on the board, making it look the same as the handout. Do two example questions with students, one with you asking a student a question and vice-versa for the second one.
3. Students stand up and talk to a classmate, asking them one question (any order is okay). If the answer is “yes,” they write in the name and ask a follow-up question. They can write one or two words, in the appropriate slot, based on the answer their partner gave them.
4. If the answer is no, they must ask another question from the survey until they get a “yes.”
5. The pair splits up and each student finds a new partner to talk to.
6. The activity continues until the allotted time is finished.

Just a Minute Skills: Speaking Materials Required: Whiteboard, timer This is a very simple activity that you can use as a fast warm-up at the beginning of class

in order to get your students talking. Write a variety of general categories on the board such as **jobs, hobbies, dreams, movies, food, etc.** Put the students into groups of 4 and they can number themselves 1-2-3-4.

Then, ask a student to throw a paper airplane at the board and whatever word it gets closest to is the topic for the first student. All the number ones must talk about that topic for one minute without stopping. If they stop, or pause too long, they've lost the challenge. You can adjust the time limit to be higher or lower depending on the level of students (beginner = 30 seconds, advanced = 2 minutes). Erase the first topic from the board and continue the activity with the remaining three students except and topics. It's helpful if the teacher does an example speech first, with a topic that the students choose. **Teaching Tip:** For higher level students, you can require that their teammates listen carefully and each of them has to ask the speaker one or two interesting follow-up

questions. **Procedure:** 1. The teacher writes topics on the whiteboard (teacher-supplied, or elicited from students). 2. Put students into groups of 4. They number themselves 1-2-3-4. 3. The teacher does an example speech with a topic that students choose. 4. One student throws a paper airplane at the whiteboard. The topic closest to where it hits is the first one to be discussed. 5. Student one has to talk about that topic for a minute without stopping.

The goal is to have minimal pauses and to never stop talking. (Optional: the other three students each ask a follow-up question). 6. Erase the first topic. Another student throws the paper airplane and finds an- other

topic. The number two students talk for a minute. Continue with the third and fourth rounds' students.

Line-Up Skills: Listening Materials Required: None. Students have to work together as a class to line up in the correct order, without talking. Specify which end of the line is the beginning and the end. Then students should communicate using body language and their fingers to get in the correct order. You can do it with the entire class, or divide the class into teams and make it into a friendly competition. Some examples include: Birthday, height, number of people living in their house, number of countries traveled to, commute time to class, time spent studying English each week, etc. **Procedure:** 1. You can play with the whole class, or divide up into teams of at least 8 students. 2. Specify the criteria by which students must line up and which end is the “smallest” and which end is the “biggest,” without speaking. 3. Students line up and raise their hands when they are finished. Check if they are correct by moving down the line and having students say their answer. Example: commute time to class = 2, 5, 10, 30, 45, 70, 90, 100, 120 minutes.

Man on the Street

Skills: Speaking/listening

Materials Required: Laminated question cards. In this activity, each student takes a turn as the reporter, asking a current events question from a card, and the group members answer as a man on the street. Begin with a discussion of the news and man on the street interviews, and/or prep a few clips of such interviews (you might include a funny one or two, such as

“Jaywalking with Jay Leno”), or clips from ELLLO (www.elllo.org) which are non-native speakers. Divide students into small groups and give each member of the group a different question card—the groups can have the same pool of cards. **Procedure:** 1. In advance, prepare question cards with one current events question on each card. Laminate them, if you want to use them with more than one class. Optionally, also prepare a few clips of man on the street interviews to show a few examples to students. 2. Begin class with a discussion of the news, specifically, man on the street interviews. 3. Explain to the class that they will take turns being a reporter and the man on the street. 4. Divide students into groups of 4-5 and give each group enough question cards for each student to have a different question. 5. If you want this to be a short activity, have each reporter choose a different man on the street, so each group member asks and answers one question each. 6. If you want to extend the activity, have a group discussion after about the different opinions on current events held by the class members.

Me, Too!

Skills: Speaking/listening Materials Required: None. This is a simple activity to uncover what your students have in common with one another. If possible, arrange the seats in a circle, so everyone can see each other. Begin by sharing a fact about yourself that you don't think is unique or unusual. For example, “I like to hike in my free time.” Any students in the class who also enjoy hiking should stand (or raise their hands) and say, “Me, too!” Go around the circle and have each

student share one fact about themselves. You could extend the activity by keeping track of numbers and noting which facts are common to the most number of students. **Teaching Tips:** You may need to remind them that these are not unusual facts; these should be things they expect to have in common with at least one other person. **Procedure:** 1. If possible, arrange the seats in a circle. 2. Begin by sharing a fact about yourself that you don't think is unique or unusual. For example, "I like to hike in my free time." 3. Ask any students in the class who also enjoy hiking to stand (or raise their hands) and say, "Me, too!" 4. Go around the circle and have each student share one fact about themselves. 5. You could extend the activity by keeping track of numbers and noting which facts are common to the most number of students.

Movable Feast Skills: Speaking/listening Materials Required: Small candies (such as M&Ms), paper plates or cups, drinking straws, pipe cleaners, skewers, and tissues or handkerchiefs This is another collaborative problem-solving activity. In advance, prepare for each group: two disposable plates or cups; a handful of M&Ms or other small candy; several drinking straws, pipe cleaners, and skewers; and a tissue or handkerchief. In class, divide students into groups of 3-4. Give each group their materials, placing all of the candies in one container and instruct them to move all of the candies from that container to the other without touching the candies with their hands. They do not need to use all of the materials, but the goal is to move the candies faster than the other groups. The winning group gets the all the candy (assuming it wasn't

actually handled during the activity). **Teaching**

Tip: You probably won't need to remind older students not to touch the candies, but there are always a couple hyper-competitive students. If you want to be strict, disqualify any groups you see using their hands. **Procedure:** 1. In advance, prepare for each group: two disposable plates or cups; a handful of M&Ms or other small candy; several drinking straws, pipe cleaners, and skewers; and a tissue or handkerchief.

2. Set up an example of the materials and explain to the class that they must work in groups to move the candies from one container to another without touching the candies. 3. Divide students into groups of 3-4 and give each group their materials, placing all of the candies in one container. 4. Let students know they do not need to use all of the materials, just the ones they think will work best. 5. Give students a minute or two to discuss a strategy before beginning. 6. The first group to move all of their candies without touching them wins all of the candy.

My Name is ____ and I like ____

Skills: Speaking/listening Materials Required:

Nothing A way that you can get your students to remember names (and you too!) is to do this simple activity. Go around the class, and have students say, "My name is ____ and I like ____." The next student repeats the previous ones (His name is ____ and he likes ____.) and adds their own. It goes on until it finally gets to you and you can impress the students with your memorization abilities! It works best for small classes of twelve or less. If you have more than twelve

students, you can divide them into groups of 10-12 people. **Teaching Tip:** Adapt this to your level of students. For absolute beginners, it might be enough to simply say their own name and then, "His/Her name is ____." For more advanced students you could include their name and what they did last night, or what they ate for lunch, especially for past tense grammar. To challenge them even more, you could include statement using the future tense, such as next weekend or next vacation. **Procedure:** 1. The first student says the sentence. "My name is ____ and I like ____." 2. The second student must repeat the first student's sentence and then add their own. The third student must repeat the second students' sentences and then add their own. 3. And so it continues, until the last student (or teacher) has a turn.

My World

Skills: Writing/reading/speaking/listening Materials Required: Nothing This is an excellent icebreaker activity that you can do on the first day of class to introduce yourself and the students to each other. You start by drawing a big circle on the whiteboard with the title, "My World." Inside the circle there are various words, pictures, or numbers that have some meaning to you. For example, inside my circle there might be 1979, blue, 37, a picture of two cats, and a mountain. The students would then have to make some guesses about why these things are special to me. The correct answers are: my birth year, favorite color, number of countries I've been to, my pets, and hiking, which is my favorite hobby. **Teaching Tips:** This is a good activity

to practice some functional language dealing with correct or incorrect guesses. Teach your students how to say things like, "You're close," "Almost," "You got it," "That's right," "Really? No!" Remember that the goal of our classes should be to make them more student-centered than teacher-centered, so try to minimize the amount of time that it takes for students to guess what's in your circle. Most of them are quite easy with only one or two more difficult ones. Then, if required, give your students some hints so they are able to get the harder ones. To increase student talking time, it's always better to have students doing this activity with each other instead of only with you. For beginners, this activity might be a bit of challenge. You could write down these question forms to help them out: Is this your ____ (hobby, birth year, age, favorite color)? Do you have */a/an ____ (cat, three family members, etc.)? Have you ____ (visited, gone to, tried, etc.)? **Procedure:** 1. Draw a big circle on the board and write "My World" at the top. Inside the circle, put a few words, pictures, or numbers which have some meaning to you. 2. Have students guess what each thing means. Give hints if necessary. 3. Have students prepare their own "world" on a piece of paper. 4. Students can play with a partner or in small groups of 3-4.

Never Have I Ever Skills:

Speaking/listening Materials Required: None This is another classic party game that you can play in your ESL speaking classes as well. The way it works is that students think of a few things they haven't done, but they think others in the class have done. For example,

maybe someone hasn't been to Japan or China, but most of the people in the class probably have. Or, perhaps someone has never tried Indian or Vietnamese food. If you have higher level classes, no thinking time is really necessary, but with intermediate students, you might need to give them a few minutes to prepare before you start the activity. You could also elicit a few possible categories such as **food, travel, hobbies, or free time** if you feel this activity will challenge your students too much when open-ended. The first student starts with one of their statements, saying, "Never have I ever ____." The other students listen and if they have done it, they get a point. I usually get students to keep track of points themselves by writing a tick on their paper or in their notebook. If you have a small class, you can appoint a captain to do this on the board. Go around the room until everyone has said at least one statement (for big classes) or a couple of statements (for smaller classes) and then tally up the final points. Whoever has the most points is the "winner" and the person who has had the most interesting life so far! If you have a large class, it's best to divide students into groups of 7-10. **Teaching Tip:** This game is quite difficult to explain, even to people who speak English as their first language so doing a demonstration with multiple examples is vital. **Procedure:** 1. Give students time to prepare 2-3 statements; the amount of time depends on the level of your students. They need to think of things that they've never done, but which they think their classmates have done. Make it clear to students that they will be using the present perfect verb form and give them some examples. 2. The first

student says one of their statements. If someone else has done it, they put up their hand and they get one point. I usually have students keep track of the points themselves or appoint a captain to keep score. 3. The next person can say their statement and you follow the same procedure, until everyone has said at least one statement. You can also continue until you've done two or three rounds, depending on your class size. 4. The person with the most points wins and has had the most interesting

life. **Variation:** You can also play where the winner is the person with the least amount of points. The object is to think of things that other people have done, and say them to get them “out.” Everyone starts with five fingers held up and the puts one finger down if they have done something. The last one out is the winner.

Only 1 Question Skills:

Listening/speaking Materials Required: Pen, paper. Students have to think of one single question about a certain topic. For example, if you're studying about holidays, they could use any of the following: “What's your least favorite holiday?” “What did you do last ____?” “What do you think about Valentine's Day?”

There are many possibilities but I usually make a couple rules that it must be interesting and also that it can't be a yes/no question. Once students have done this, they ask at least 10 people their question and quickly record their answers with 1 or 2 words. After the time is up, they tabulate the answers and can quickly report to a small group what they found out about the topic. You can ask each small group to

share the most interesting thing they learned with the entire class. **Procedure:** 1. Give students a topic and have each student make one *interesting* question about it. Give them examples of interesting versus boring questions. 2. Each student talks to 10+ students, using the same question. They quickly write down answers with 1-2 words. 3. Students tabulate the results and report them to a small group of 4-6 people (or the entire class if fewer than 10 students).

Phone Show and Tell Skills:

Speaking/listening Materials Required: Students' phones, optional PPT image of a photo from your phone In small groups, each person chooses one image on their phone to share with the group. They should show the image and discuss what's happening and why they chose to share it. **Teaching Tip:** An easy way to quickly change groups is to number students, for example, 1 to 4. When you change groups, tell all 1's to get together, 2's together and so on. Be sure to show each new group where to sit. If you have ten groups, you can simply divide the new groups in half.

Procedure: 1. Optional: in advance, prepare a PPT of an image from your phone. 2. Divide students into groups of 3-5 and ensure that any students who don't have a phone are divided evenly among the groups. 3. Show the PPT and tell students that it is a picture from your phone. Discuss the picture; tell what is happening and why you chose to share that particular picture. 4. Instruct them to take out their own phones and give them 2-3 minutes to choose a photo to share with their group.

5. If you want to extend the activity, you can have students change groups and repeat the activity, either with the same image or after choosing a new one to share.

Picture Cards Story

Skills: Speaking/listening Materials Required:

Laminated picture cards, one per student plus your own

This is a story creating activity. In advance, prepare a picture card for each student plus one for yourself. These can be flash cards or random pictures, but try not to have too many elements in one picture. The pictures should have a mix of people, places, and things. If possible, have students sit in a circle.

Give each student a card and start a story based on the picture you have. Go around the circle, having each student add to the story, based on the picture they have.

Teaching Tips: If the class is small, you may want to have two cards per student and go around the circle twice. To keep students' attention on the developing story, periodically take a break and ask a few comprehension questions.

Procedure: 1. In advance, prepare a picture card for each student plus one for yourself. These can be flash cards or random pictures, but try not to have too many elements in one picture. The pictures should have a mix of people, places, and things. 2. If possible, have students sit in a circle. 3. Give each student a card and start a story based on the picture you have.

4. Go around the circle, having each student add to the story, based on the picture they have.

Picture Quest Skills: Reading Materials Required:

Picture quest sheet and cameras/phones (1 of each per team) An excellent way for students to get to know each other is to have some fun together in small groups. The picture quest is one of my favorite activities to help students get to know each other on a more personal level through working together in a team. The way it works is that you give each group a list of things that they must take pictures of, in no particular order. You should require that each group use only one camera/phone so they don't split it. Then, the first team to come back with everything correct is the winner. If there are some errors, you can add some total time to the score and find the winner that way. I usually give out some prizes such as a candy bar or notebook to each person on the winning team. It's possible to extend this activity by sharing the pictures with other teams through a class website, or other media platform. **Here's the picture quest that I use in my own classes:** Rules: only 1 camera The pictures must be taken today You can't draw something on the board and take a picture Only 1 picture 1 time (total of 24 different pictures required) If you make a mistake, the penalty is +6 minutes to your time.

Any order is okay

1. Of someone wearing something green
2. Of something you can recycle
3. Of something **healthy** you can **eat**
4. Of someone who works at this university
5. Of something very big
6. Of something that is strange to see at a school

7. Of a flower
8. Of ALL your group members
9. Of a map
10. Of someone smoking
11. Of 3 people together. 1st person = no feet on the ground. 2nd person= foot on the ground, 1 foot **not** on the ground. 3rd person=2 feet on the ground.
12. Of something that is wet
13. Of something that is too hot to touch
14. Of a cat or dog (real!)
15. Of someone in a suit and tie
16. Of a bus
17. Of an insect or bug
18. Of a TV
19. Of something that is dirty
20. Of the best place to eat lunch at our school
21. Of somewhere that is very relaxing
22. Of somewhere that is very stressful
23. Of something that is interesting
24. Of something that is funny [https://docs.google.com/document/d/ 125Q74p2ECx-OHY3Gfb2_eR-HBfj3IGtLEvHk-ZEdg/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/125Q74p2ECx-OHY3Gfb2_eR-HBfj3IGtLEvHk-ZEdg/edit?usp=sharing)

Procedure:

1. Give each group one picture quest paper.
2. Go over the rules together as a class.
3. Give the students 5 minutes to talk together and formulate their plan (no pictures yet though!).
4. Send students out to complete the quest.
5. Check the pictures from each group as they come back. If there are any mis- takes, add six minutes to the total time.
6. The team with the lowest time is the winner.

Puzzle Finder Skills: Speaking/listening Materials Required: puzzle pieces (from an actual puzzle or a cut and laminated image) The objects of this activity are both teamwork (to create the puzzle) and a review of common vocabulary, such as colors, shapes, and common objects. Before class, you should either prepare a puzzle with enough pieces for each student to have one or two, or print an image which you cut into the correct number of pieces and laminate. The former is easier, but the latter gives you much more flexibility and you can cut the pieces as large as you like. In order for students to put the puzzle together correctly, they will need to be able to describe their piece to others as they mingle looking for adjacent pieces, as well as listen to others' descriptions. **Teaching Tips:** If you are using a ready-made puzzle, a child's puzzle will have the right combination of large size and a low number of pieces. If you choose your own image, you can print the pieces even larger, making it easier to work together. To make the task more challenging, have students describe their pieces to one another, rather than show them. To make the task less challenging, have two puzzles (fewer edgeless pieces) or use an image with obvious elements, for example, a picture of a park, rather than a Picasso.

Procedure: 1. In advance, either get a puzzle with enough pieces for each student to have one or two (so, no 500 piece monster puzzles) or print an image (A3 or larger), cut it into the right number of pieces, and laminate it. 2. Give each student a puzzle piece or two,

and instruct them to work together to complete the puzzle. 3. According to the level of the students, allow them to show each other the pieces as they work or require them to describe the shape of their piece and the image fragment.

QR Code Hunt Skills: Speaking/listening Materials

Required: Internet access, printer, tape/Blu-tack, student phones with QR code reader apps

installed This activity requires a bit more prep than others, but (as of writing) the novelty factor is high enough to draw some students in who might otherwise be too cool for school. Classtools.net makes it easy to put together a QR code hunt, so don't worry if you haven't used QR codes before—if you can type, you can do this activity. **Teaching Tip:** You can go in a few different directions with this activity, and a pub quiz is a light-hearted way to get students talking, just make sure the questions aren't so obscure that your students spend the entire class Googling the

answers! **Procedure:** 1. In advance, write your questions in a Word document. These can be discussion questions, trivia questions (pub quiz), or you can pre-test student levels, particularly if you are teaching a subject

class. 2. Go to <http://www.classtools.net/QR/> and copy and paste. 3. Create the QR codes and print. 4. Post the printouts in various places around the class, or better yet, a larger area.

5. Before dividing students into groups, make sure at least one member of each group has a QR code reader on their phone. If not, give them a minute to download

an app—there are plenty of them and most adult students will already have one. 6. Divide students into groups of 3-4 and give them a time limit to find and answer all of the questions. 7. Particularly if you plan to assess student levels, as an option you can have students write the questions they find, and their answers. 8. Wrap up the class with a group discussion of the answers.

Random Acts of Kindness Video Treasure

Hunt Skills: Speaking/listening Materials Required: one smart phone per group, one checklist of possible acts of kindness per group This is really a scavenger hunt in disguise. Students are given a list of kind acts and they must go out and do as many as they can in the given time. They must also film the kind acts being done. You will have to tailor the acts you assign according to your situation such as where the school is located and the time available but some easy ones are: Each group member:

- Write a kind note and leave it on a windshield
 - Give a stranger a flower or a hug
 - Pick up 3 pieces of litter
 - Help a stranger carry something, such as groceries
- When time is up, each group should show you the clips they have filmed. If they have an app like Splice, they can stitch the clips together into a single video, but that is optional. **Teaching Tips:** You can assign different points for different activities, if some are more difficult to accomplish than others. I give out extra points for consistently speaking English in the video clips of

the tasks being carried out: asking if the person wants a “free hug” or naming the object they are properly disposing of and where they found it, but require each student to speak at least one sentence in English. If picking up litter is one of the kind acts on your list, it would be nice if you provided each group with a small bag and some plastic gloves. **Procedure:** 1. In advance, prepare a checklist of 10-12 kind acts. Print enough for each group to have one. Include important information, such as the time limit and how much English they must speak in the video. 2. Divide students into groups of 4-5, making sure each group has at least one smart phone which can record videos. 3. Begin by talking about random acts of kindness: are they familiar with the term, have they ever done or received a random act of kindness, etc. 4. Give out the lists and let the class know the time limit and the minimum English they must use in the videos. 5. When time is up, watch the videos and declare a winner: the group who completed the most tasks or got the most points if you assigned different point values. 6. You could extend the task by showing the videos to the class during the next lesson and having them discuss what they did and how they felt.

Show and Tell Skills: Speaking/listening Materials Required: None This is a classic activity from way back in elementary school but it can work well in your classes too. Tell students a few days before the “show and tell” class that they need to bring an object from home that is meaningful to them. If it's something really big (a piano) or something that doesn't transport

easily (a cat), then they can email you a picture to put up on the screen instead. Students give a short presentation, talking about the item and why it's meaningful to them. The audience can ask a few follow-up questions. In order to make the question time go more smoothly with shy classes, you can put students into teams of 4-6 and each team has to ask one question. You could also award points or give a reward to the 3 or 4 students who ask the most thoughtful questions. **Teaching Tips:** This activity is an excellent way to get your students doing presentations in a low pressure way. If they have something familiar to hold on to, they'll feel less nervous than standing in front of the class with nothing. In addition, almost everybody likes talking about themselves! Instead of doing this activity in a single class, you could do it over the course of a semester with one or two students going at the beginning or end of class; you can assign specific days to each student. **Procedure:** 1. Tell students to bring a meaningful object from home, or send a picture if bringing the object isn't practical. 2. Students introduce the object in a short presentation of 1-2 minutes, depending on the level. 3. The other students listen and can ask some follow-up questions.

Splice Video Introduction Skills:

Speaking/listening Materials Required: iPhones, iPads, and/or iPod Touches, Splice app, Internet access, large monitor Splice is a very basic, easy to use video creation app, which unfortunately does not have an

Android version, as of writing. Like the QR Code Hunt activity, this is using a bit of technology to make something old new again; in this case, tired old self-introductions. Begin class by showing a Splice video introducing yourself to the class. The video should be about 30 seconds long. Then, have students work in small groups of 3-5 taking turns filming one another's brief self-introductions of around 30 seconds each. If you are worried about their technological proficiency, there are *YouTube* tutorials which show just how easy it is to use this app. When everyone in the group has been filmed, the videos are stitched together and emailed to the teacher to show on the big screen for the class. **Teaching Tips:** If possible, provide several devices yourself with the app already loaded to save time. If this is not a first day activity, find out in advance which students have iPhones or iPads and ask them to come with the app already downloaded. If your class is very large, even 30 second clips will add up, particularly since they need to be filmed, combined, and then shown to the class. So, a shorter alternative might be necessary, such as having students work in groups of 5-6 to create a 20-second group cheer that they create to introduce their group. **Procedure:** 1. In advance, prepare a 30-second video using Splice to introduce yourself to the class. 2. Divide students into groups of 3-5 and have them take turns filming one another's brief self-introductions of around 30 seconds each. Larger groups will need more time but fewer devices. 3. Optionally, show a YouTube tutorial, if your students seem unsure of how to use the app. 4. When all students in a group have finished filming, the segments

should be stitched together and emailed to the teacher. 5. When all the videos have been emailed and downloaded, show them to the class on the big screen.

Story Picture Cards Sequencing Skills:

Speaking/listening Materials Required: Laminated cards which have a sequence of pictures, one per student plus your own This is an activity better suited to higher level students. In advance, prepare individual pictures which tell a story when put together. Give each student one picture. Without showing one another their pictures, students must discuss the images in order to determine the correct sequence of images which tells a story. When they think they have the correct order, everyone reveals their pictures to see if they are correct. **Teaching Tips:** If the class is very large, have two or even three different sets of pictures, each telling a different story. Clearly mark each set, so students know who they should be working with. This is intended to be a mingling activity, but it could be done in groups while sitting. Make sure the pictures have elements which lend themselves to easier sequencing, such as a clock, the sun/ moon, and activities usually done at a certain time, such as eating, commuting, and working. The books *Zoom* and *Re-Zoom* by Istvan Banyai are perfect for this activity, if you can get your hands on a copy. Just be sure to use a sequence of pages in order.

Procedure: 1. In advance, prepare a series of pictures which tell a story when put in order. 2. Tell students they must discuss their pictures without revealing them to each other, in order to determine the correct

sequence of the images. 3. When the students all think they have the correct order, have them reveal their pictures to one another to see if they are correct. The teacher can check answers with the class if necessary.

Student Engineers Skills:

Speaking/listening Materials Required: Disposable cups and pipe cleaners/ uncooked spaghetti/ wooden skewers, optional: ticking time bomb sound effect This is a popular activity and is easy to adjust according to what materials you have on hand or can acquire easily. Divide the class into groups of 3-4 and give each group the same assortment of items. Easy ones to prepare are disposable cups and pipe cleaners/uncooked spaghetti/skewers. Give them a building task, such as building the tallest tower. **Teaching Tips:** A ticking time bomb sound effect is really fun, because students will start racing to build faster and inevitably some will destroy what they have built. Yes, I amuse myself in mean ways sometimes. You could just have them build a house of cards, but having them incorporate a variety of materials requires more creativity. I've given one example of a tower made of cups and skewers, because those are cheap, easy to find, and not much of a hassle to transport, but you can literally give them any assortment of random objects. If you really want to tap into their creativity and develop team-work, don't give them a set end product; have them decide in their groups what they will build then each group can introduce their product to the class.

Procedure: 1. In advance, prepare "building materials" so each group has the same assortment of items. You want them to have plenty of each item, at least 20-30

cups and skewers, for example. 2. Divide the class into groups of 3-4 students and give each group the same assortment of items. 3. Give them a building task, such as building the tallest tower, and a time limit. The shorter the time, the more pressure will be on, and the more fun to watch. 4. When time is up, the group with the tallest tower is the winner.

Talk Show Skills: Speaking/listening Materials

Required: Nothing (optional: toy microphones, video clip with mon- itor) This is a pair work variation of self-introductions. My higher level students tend to find this more fun than the same old self-introductions they do all the time. I set up the front of the class as a talk show set with a desk and chair (for the host) and a chair for the person being interviewed. Then, I divide the stu- dents into pairs. Before beginning, I introduce the activity by asking students about talk shows. Most students will be very familiar with the concept.

We then discuss what kinds of questions a host might ask. One pair at a time comes to the front and the two students take turns being the host and the guest. The host is given either a set number of questions to ask or a time limit. After each host's time is up, the teacher can open the floor to "audience" questions. **Teaching Tips:** While introducing the topic, it may be helpful to brainstorm a written list of questions on the white board for them to refer to as needed. However, you will need to remind them that talk show hosts look at the person as they ask ques- tions. The larger the class, the less time each pair will have to speak in front of the

class. So, if your class is very large, limit each pair to 2-3 questions each before switching roles. If you have a large class and a short period, this may not be a feasible activity for even an entire class period. **Procedure:** 1. Before class, set up a desk and chair and another chair, similar to the set-up of a talk-show. 2. To demonstrate, show the class a short clip of a popular celebrity being interviewed on a talk show to show the class, or simply talk about talk shows: what kinds of questions are asked, etc. 3. Divide students into pairs: interviewer/host and guest. (They will switch roles.) 4. Have one pair at time come to the front of the class (the audience) and conduct their interviews. The guests are playing themselves—this is a self-introduction. 5. After a set number of questions (about 5) or your time limit, allow questions to be asked by the audience. Then, have the students switch roles.

The Hot Seat Skills: Speaking/listening Materials Required: Nothing This is a great activity if you have a small class of less than 10 students. Each student has to think of one interesting thing about themselves that they want to share with the class. My examples are that I have an identical twin and that my mom is also one (it's really true!), or that I've been to more than 50 countries. Then one by one, students have a chance to sit in the "hot-seat." They say their interesting statement and the class has to quickly ask five follow-up questions. The best thing about this activity is that there are usually a lot more questions that students want to ask and they'll follow up during the breaks or after class. **Procedure:** 1. Each student thinks of one

interesting thing about themselves. 2. The first student comes to the front of the class, sits in the “hot-seat,” and says their interesting statement. 3. The class has to quickly ask them five follow-up questions, to which the student answers, and then the student goes to sit back down in their regular seat. 4. The next student comes up and the procedure is repeated until all students have been in the “hot-seat.”

The “Expert” Conversation Activity Skills:

Speaking/listening Materials Required:

Nothing Students write down five things which they’re an expert. Once they’ve written their lists, they circle the three that they think will be most interesting to other students in the class. Next, divide the students up into pairs and give them about 5-6 minutes to ask each other questions about their area of expertise. Keep changing partners for as long as you want the activity to last, but more than 3-4 times gets kind of

boring. **Teaching Tips:** This is a particularly useful activity for practicing many of the speaking sub- skills such as initiating a conversation, turn-taking, and appropriate length of responses. You can pre-teach some of these things before you begin the activity. For example, show your students how to initiate a conversation by saying something like, “I see you’re interested in _____. What/where/why/ when/who/how _____?” You could also teach your students about appropriate length of responses by doing one bad example and then one good example. Continue with the bad example by rambling on and on until the students are feeling a little bit uncomfortable and they’ll see

clearly what you mean. If possible, try to get students to talk to someone that they don't know. This is particularly helpful for the students who don't know anybody else in the class, or don't have a friend in the class. Having a five minute conversation with someone makes you feel like you actually know them and these students won't feel so alone in future classes. I do this by asking students to choose partners whose names they don't know. **Procedure:** 1. Talk about what "expert" means with your students. Tell them five things that you're an expert in. 2. Students make a list of 5 items. 3. Students choose the three things that they think will be most interesting to the others in the class. Tell students to do the same with their own lists. 4. Students find a partner and talk together for 5-6 minutes about the chosen topics. Starting the conversation, turn-taking, and changing topics is up to them. 5. Students switch partners and continue.

The Student Becomes the Teacher Skills:

Speaking/listening Materials Required: None Have each student prepare a brief lesson introducing a hobby or interest of theirs. For example, if they enjoy football, they could explain the basic rules. If they insist their only interest is playing computer games, have them introduce their favorite game and explain how it is played. Remind them that they will be explaining their topic to an absolute beginner so they should assume that the other students in the class have no prior knowledge about their topic. **Teaching**

Tips: This is not a first-day activity because you need to have an idea of their level and what, if any,

scaffolding will be required. **Procedure:** 1. In advance, have students prepare a three-minute lesson introducing their hobby or interest. If your class is large or very low level, reduce the time to two minutes. 2. Plan to give each student time to answer questions about their hobby. 3. Depending on the level, you may need to scaffold with a short how-to reading passage, to give them an example of how instructions should be given. As always, model the activity with your own three-minute lesson about your own hobby or interest.

Toilet Paper Icebreaker Skills:

Speaking/listening Materials Required: Toilet paper This is an icebreaker activity for the first day of class so that you can help the students get to know each other in a fun way. Bring in a roll of toilet paper, and depending on the size of your class, tell the students they can however many pieces of toilet paper they want (4-7 works well). You can also play this game with a bag of wrapped candies (wrapped for sanitary reasons) and as the students complete each speaking task, they can eat the candy. In fact, maybe all your classes would like this option better, but it depends on your budget! Don't give them any other information aside from the minimum and maximum number of pieces of toilet paper they can take. Once everyone has their toilet paper or candy, explain that they have to tell the class one thing about themselves for each piece they took. For each sentence, they "throw-away" one piece until they're done. If you have an extremely large class, you can put

the students in groups of 5-6 instead of playing all together as you would for a smaller class. **Teaching Tips:** Students are always so curious about why they have a choice for how many they can chose. Be mysterious and don't give away the secret until everyone has chosen.

Procedure: 1. Divide the students into groups of 5-6 (for larger classes), or play together for a smaller class. 2. Students choose the number of pieces of toilet paper that they want depend- ing on your minimum and maximum criteria. 3. Tell the students that for each square they took, they must say one inter- esting thing about themselves. 4. The first student says one sentence and discards that square into a pile in the middle (or eats the candy!). The other students could make a response of some sort such as "Me too," or "Really?", or "I can't believe it!" The second student says one sentence and discards a square. Continue in a circle until all the pieces are gone. 5. A fun variation for higher level students is that they can ask a follow-up ques- tion after each statement, but only one and the fastest person gets to do it. For each follow-up question, they can discard a square into the pile.

Used Card Salesman Skills:

Speaking/listening Materials Required: Playing cards cut into pieces This is a negotiation activity. In advance, take a deck of playing cards and cut each card into an equal number of pieces (2-4; the more pieces, the longer the game). Mix the cut cards and divide into the number of groups you will have. Divide the class into groups of 3-5 and give each group their pile of cards.

Give them 2-3 minutes to sort their cards and see how many complete cards they can make with the pieces that they have, and which pieces they need to complete their cards. Once the cards have been sorted, instruct them to complete their missing sets. Give them a time limit of about 10 minutes. The goal is to have the largest number of completed cards at the end. Students will have to negotiate with other groups, trying to get missing pieces while trying to keep all of the pieces they have. You will soon see which group has the slickest salesmen. **Teaching Tips:** If you want to try this activity with lower level students, begin by reviewing some negotiating language, like trade. You could demonstrate by offering to trade with a student something from your desk for something on their desk. You may want to even the odds by having an equal mix of pieces, such as 1-2 complete sets, X number of half sets, and Y number of single pieces. Or you

may want to stack the deck, so to speak. **Procedure:** 1. In advance, prepare a deck of playing cards by cutting each card into 2-4 pieces. 2. In class, tell the students that they must practice their salesmanship on their classmates. Explain that they will receive cut up cards and must try to make sets of complete cards. At the end of the activity, the group with the most sets will win. 3. Divide the class into groups of 3-5 and give each group an equal share of the mixed card pieces. 4. Allow 2-3 minutes to sort the cards, so each group can see which card pieces they have and make note of which pieces they need to complete a set (a set being a complete card). 5. Give students ten minutes to complete their missing sets, but don't give them any

further rules. They should consider as a group whether it would be better to work together or split up and approach different groups at once. 6. When time is up, have each group tally how many complete sets they have and how many single card pieces they still have.

Would You Rather Skills:

Speaking/listening Materials Required: List of questions "Would You Rather?" is a fun party game. You can buy ready-made decks, but they aren't ESL specific. I make my own cards, but you can just make a list of questions or do this without materials, if you can think of choices on the spot. For example, "Would you rather have eyes like a fly, or eyes like a spider?" Students must choose one and explain why. If your class is small, you can do this as a single group, but I prefer to work in small groups of 3-4, giving each group part of the deck of cards. If you want to work in groups, but haven't prepared questions in advance, state two choices and give each group 1-2 minutes to discuss amongst themselves. **Procedure:** 1. In advance, prepare cards with two choices—the weirder, the better. For example, "Would you rather have eyes like a fly, or eyes like a spider?" If you want to do this without cards, simply give students two choices and 1-2 minutes to discuss. 2. Divide students into groups of 3-4 and give each group an equal portion of the deck of question cards. 3. Have students take turns choosing a card to ask their group, or read aloud and give their own answer.

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